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Media Release

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Board of Directors of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation Selects David Nelems as New Director
Former Founder of an Atlanta-Based Technology Company Will Guide Bluffton's Start-up Companies

Town Manager Anthony Barrett appointed David Nelems, with the recommendation of the Board of Directors of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation, as the new Executive Director of the Center. The former founder and president of an Atlanta-based technology company, ActiveGroup, will begin August 19.

"This is a perfect fit for my skill set," Nelems said. "I have walked the steps myself of establishing an internet startup, guiding my company through road shows for institutional investors, developing and selling cutting-edge technology and, ultimately, selling the company."

"I am honored to use my skills and experiences to nurture other companies in a town that has fully embraced what start-ups can contribute to its economy."

Mayor Lisa Sulka, who also acts as the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Center, said she looks forward to the second year of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation.

"The Center just welcomed three more companies, its new director will start in a few weeks and Clemson's Institute for Economic and Community Development is fully invested in our partnership to create regional economic development," Sulka said.

Marc Orlando, Interim Director of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation and Deputy Town Manager, said he is thrilled to have Nelems at the helm to take the Center to its next level of growth.

“Nelems, as an entrepreneur himself and the founder of a technology-video company, gives the Center the expertise to grow our mission,” Orlando said.

Sulka said Town Council has a vision of developing drivers for Bluffton’s and the region’s economic development and the Don Ryan Center for Innovation is a key player in that plan.

Nelems said he personally understands why regional economic development is important to the Lowcountry.

“A diverse economy helps broaden the tax base. On a quality of life level, it also provides options for Bluffton’s residents and families,” Nelems said. “I don’t want Bluffton residents driving elsewhere to work, I want them to live and work here, contributing to our Town. Years from now, I want my children and my neighbors’ children to know there are jobs available here after college in many fields.”

Nelems was formerly the founder and president of ActiveGroup. This privately-held company provided video-streaming services to the marketing research industry. This technology enabled marketing clients to view their focus-groups in nearly 450 different locations in real-time, eliminating the need for clients to travel.

Nelems said the company grew to \$4.2 million dollars in sales in six years. Nelems also was the Chief Operating, Financial and Technology Officer for Juls Candles, during which he reorganized the company’s technical and financial procedures.

Nelems’ diverse background also includes stints as a pilot for Delta Air Elite and a keyboard player for a regional rock band. He earned a degree in human relations and aviation management from Georgia State University.

Nelems will earn \$70,000 as Executive Director of the Don Ryan Center for Innovation.

Reference Notes

About The Don Ryan Center For Innovation:

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation is a public-private partnership between the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development, Care Core National and the Town of Bluffton. The Center’s mission is to advance regional economic development by offering a technology incubator program that provides the resources entrepreneurs, inventors and small business people need to assist them in their quest for success.

The Center offers space, resources and links participants to support in intellectual property, technology evaluation, and product development services as well as seed financing, business mentorships, corporate relationships and hands-on consulting support.

Located in the May River Technology Park at Buckwalter Place in Bluffton, the Don Ryan Center for Innovation is the catalyst innovators need to make their concept a reality.

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation is supported by the Town of Bluffton, Clemson University's Institute for Economic and Community Development, CareCore National and Buckwalter Tech Park along with additional private sponsors including: St. Joseph's/Candler, Nexsen Pruet, Regions Bank and Hargray Communications. Other sponsors are Bank of America, McNair Law Firm, Custom Audio Video, WebsterRogers LLP and BFG Communications.

This 501(c) (3) community-driven organization reports to an experienced seven-member board appointed by the Town Council of Bluffton that works in cooperation with Clemson University's Institute for Economic and Community Development to create, accelerate, expand and incubate jobs for our region. Known as a "Clemson Technology Village," this program is currently exclusive to Bluffton and Hartsville, with plans to expand to other rural communities throughout South Carolina.

About the Clemson Technology Village:

The Clemson Technology Village is a Clemson University sponsored program designed to support new technology company formation and development in non-metropolitans areas of South Carolina. This program connects communities to intellectual property, technology evaluation, product development services, seed financing, business mentorship, corporate relationships and recruiting. The program employs the following three fundamental elements:

- Community-owned and staffed business incubators.
 - The Regional Entrepreneurial Development Center (REDC) housed at the Sandhill Research and Education Center in Columbia and staffed by commercialization professionals located within the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development.
 - The Innovation Network, a web ware program designed by Clemson University providing programs for supporting community consultants and emerging companies.
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